

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Elsie Bell Grosvenor, October 20, 1914

Beinn Bhreagh, near Baddeck, Nova Scotia. October 20, 1914. Mrs G H Grosvenor, 1328 Eighteenth Street, Washington, D.C. Dear Elsie;—

I have been so much interested in your note of October 9, about Dr Heisin's work, that I have put the whole thing in the Recorder. Look out for it. You are all the time meeting interesting people in Washington and I hope the spirit will move you to send some more nice letters like the last that I can crib for the Recorder.

We are planning out here a new houseboat, to be made in the Laboratory this Winter and to be rented out to Summer visitors or others. We find that a house-boat of moderate size can be built for a thousand dollars so that a rental of one hundred dollars for the season would yield ten percent on the investment. Of course people hiring the boat would have also to hire a motor boat to tow it, UNLESS — we can propel it by wind.

Mr Baldwin thinks that the Get-Away houseboat, with its large expanse of walls, and its slight pull would make headway with the wind and be able to steer to a considerable angle on either side of the wind, without any sails at all; and that if we adapt the awning as a sail 2 Mrs Grosvenor, she would go very well indeed, so long as you don't attempt to tack against the wind. We are going to try her this afternoon. If at all successful it would be easy to make a cheap houseboat so formed that the sides of the house would become sails and the addition of a small sailed surface awning above would bring her under complete control when going in the general direction of the wind. Such a houseboat would cost the renter less than if he had to provide a motorboat to tug it. He would then only have to employ a motor boat when he goes against the wind.

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I am so glad we have Melville here. I don't think he is losing much in his studies and is certainly having fine practice in arithmetic. He is interested in all our experiments and is going aboard the houseboat this afternoon to boss the job. He is out of doors a great deal of the time riding or driving his pony or sailing his dinghy. And is altogether in fine physical condition. He evidently looks upon Miss Schmidt as a little girl, and they go out racing in their sailing dinghies. He reads with me every evening and I fancy that I note a considerable improvement in his manner of reading. I never saw a boy with a more helpful spirit. He is always doing little things for his Grandmamma and for me and for other people. I think he is becoming braver too, and more self-reliant. He is not nearly so timid as he used to be.

Your loving father Alexander Graham Bell